

ENCYCLICAL



Jennie Augusta Brownscombe, "The First Thanksgiving at Plymouth", 1914, Pilgrim Hall Museum, Plymouth, Mass.

Thanksgiving Day

**Hope in God,
for I shall again praise
Him, my help and my God.**

Psalm 43:5

To the Most Reverend Hierarchs, the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils of the Greek Orthodox Communities, the Distinguished Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Philoptochos Sisterhoods, the Youth, the Hellenic Organizations, and the entire Greek Orthodox Family in America

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we celebrate this national holiday of Thanksgiving, we acknowledge that we often do so in the security and peace of this country in which we live. We are blessed with liberty and with a level of stability and provision that encourages words and sentiments of thanksgiving for these benefits and blessings. Certainly, we should offer our praise and gratitude to God for the opportunity to live in freedom and to know and experience the value of this freedom for human achievement, and most importantly, for our spiritual lives and our calling to share grace and truth.

However, we should also recognize that the act and attitude of thanksgiving is also related to struggle and hardship. The first Thanksgiving, which provided the origins of our national observance, followed an arduous and costly journey to this land by the Pilgrims. To escape persecution, they made a lengthy voyage to this continent, faced disease and death, and attempted to establish a new home in very challenging physical and natural conditions. Their survival of these hardships through faith and hope led them in 1621 to offer thanksgiving to God for His amazing grace and providence.

The official establishment of a national day of thanksgiving by President Abraham Lincoln in 1864 was also related to great hardship and tragedy. For almost four years the nation had been engaged in a deadly civil war; and as the conflict was coming to a conclusion,

President Lincoln called upon his fellow citizens "to offer thanksgiving and praise to Almighty God...and penitent and fervent prayers and supplications to the Great Disposer of Events for a return of the inestimable blessings of peace, union, and harmony throughout the land."

From the Holy Scriptures the words of the Psalms direct us to see the power of thanksgiving in struggle and affliction. In the midst of affliction and persecution, the Psalmist says, *Why are you so sad, O my soul? And why do you trouble me? Hope in God, for I will give thanks to Him. My God is the salvation of my countenance* (Psalm 41:12). Thanksgiving strengthens hope, and hope guides faith toward deliverance and salvation in the Lord.

As we see in the origins of Thanksgiving Day and in Scripture, true thankfulness and the character of our gratitude are revealed both in times when we are blessed with peace and abundance and in times of affliction and great challenges. In both we are called as God's people to worship Him, to give thanks and praise to Him as our Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer, and to commune with Him in faith and commitment through the supreme sacrament of thanksgiving, the Holy Eucharist. In thanksgiving and grace, we offer from our blessings so that others in need might be blessed as well. In times of struggle, our witness of thanksgiving becomes more powerful. Our worship, offering, and gratitude in the midst of hardship affirm our trust in God, our faith in His deliverance, and our hope in salvation. With boldness in the face of adversity, we are able to proclaim, *O, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever!* (Psalm 135:1)

On this blessed Thanksgiving Day, in all of the circumstances of our lives, may we raise our voices in praise to Almighty God, offering a witness of the source and promise of our gratitude. May you and your families have a blessed day of gratitude, fellowship and peace.

With paternal love in Christ,

Archbishop Demetrios

† DEMETRIOS, Archbishop of America



GOA photo

Archbishop Demetrios and Bishop Andonios of Phasiane discuss ideas for the interior of St. Nicholas Church and National Shrine with hieromonk Arsenios on Mt. Athos.

Four Weeks, 20,000 Miles (more or less)

by Jim Golding

For Archbishop Demetrios, the period from mid-October to mid-November was not exactly a typical work schedule. Instead, it proved to be a grueling transcontinental road trip stretching from New York, to Athens, Greece, to Mt Athos, to Munich, Germany, to Long Island, to Boston, to San Diego, Calif., back to New York, Long Island again, Stamford, Conn., and Dallas.

Beginning Oct. 13 with the two-day meeting of the Holy Eparchial Synod, there followed the fall session of the Archdiocesan Council, on the 14th and 15th, the Oct. 16-17 Archons meeting, banquet and installation, and a flight to Greece on the 18th.

Ninety minutes after his plane landed on Oct. 19, he attended the two-day international conference on the Middle East, where he addressed the gathering upon his arrival. (October issue).

The stay in Athens included another international conference the next day. "The spiritual center and the diaspora" conference, organized jointly by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the American Jewish Committee to mark the 25th anniversary of diplomatic ties between Greece and Israel. From there, he visited the Benaki Museum to view the Santiago Calatrava exhibition on St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine, and the Demetrian Center, established with donations from the Archdiocese of America for the care of children who are victims of the current economic crisis. After having lunch with the children, His Eminence accepted the Medal of St. Dionisios the Aeropagite, the highest honor given by the Archdiocese of Athens and All Greece. Flying to his hometown of Thessaloniki, the Archbishop, accompanied by Archdiocese Chancellor Bishop Andonios

of Phasiane and Archdeacon Panteleimon Papadopoulos, went on to Mount Athos for a two-day visit starting Oct. 22. It had been raining for two days.

After arriving at the entry port of Daphne by boat from Ouranopolis, they were welcomed by Mt. Athos' governor, Aristos Kasmiroglou. At the monastery of Xenophontos they were officially received at a doxology with the brotherhood of monks. It was the Archbishop's first visit to Xenophontos since 1957 when he was a lay theologian. His Eminence, now 87, has known the abbot, the Rev. Archimandrite Alexios, more than 50 years.

During their stay, the Archbishop, bishop and archdeacon met with noted iconographer hieromonk Fr. Loucas to discuss the iconography project planned for St. Nicholas Church at the World Trade Center.

They also toured Fr. Loucas' iconography studio and the monastery museum.

In the evening, a synaxis of the brotherhood took place with the Archbishop.

Oct. 23, rising at 4 a.m., he officiated at the divine liturgy that began at 6 a.m.

After the liturgy they went to Karyes, the capital of Mt. Athos, where they met with the "epistasia" (the Athonite council), then attended the Church of the Holy Protection to revere the sacred icon of Axion Estin.

There followed a meeting with the St. Nicholas Brotherhood at Bourazeri in Karyes, and another meeting with hieromonk Arsenios to discuss the interior design of St. Nicholas.

The Archbishop's group then departed for the Monastery of Iviron, and were officially welcomed by Archimandrite Vasilios Gondikakis, the former abbot who also has known the Archbishop for over 50 years.

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CLERGY UPDATE

Assignments

Fr. Luke Palumbis – St. Basil the Great Church, Houston, Texas 07/01/15

Fr. Ioannis Vernikos – St. George Church, Hollywood, Fla. 10/01/15

Fr. Luke Uhl – St. Nicholas Church, Grand Junction, Colo. 11/01/15

Fr. Nichoals Bekris – Holy Resurrection Church, Castro Valley, Calif. 11/15/15

Offikia

Fr. Demetrios Tsigas – Office of Protopresbyter, bestowed by Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta 09/27/15

Fr. Teodor Petrutiu – Office of Proto-

presbyter of the Ecumenical Throne, bestowed by Patriarch Bartholomew 10/08/15

Fr. Nikiforos Fakinos – Office of Protopresbyter, bestowed by Archbishop Demetrios 10/25/15

Priests on Loan

V. Rev. Fr. Maximos Politis, Oct. 1, (from the Church of Greece)

Suspensions/Defrockings

Adam Metropoulos - Defrocked for violation of the Archdiocese Sexual Misconduct Policy.